**How would I describe management-oriented evaluation approaches**?

The management-oriented approach is meant to serve decision makers such as managers, policy makers, boards, practitioners and others. It is based on the organizational structure that there are different levels of decisions and decision makers. The decision maker is the audience to whom the evaluation is directed. The decision maker’s decisions and concerns drive the direction of the evaluation.

**What is the basic framework used by most management-oriented evaluations?**

The basic framework used was first developed by Shufflebeam in 1971. According to Shufflebeam (as quoted in Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004, p.89) evaluation is “the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives.” Shufflebeam’s model is called the CIPP evaluation model. The frame work helps managers and administrators that are faced with 4 different types of decisions.

* Context evaluation- deciding what needs to be addressed by a program and what already exists.
* Input evaluation- determines what resources are available, what other alternatives might be considered and what plan seems to have the most potential of helping the program.
* Process evaluation- how well is the plan being implemented, what things threaten the success of the program, what changes are necessary.
* Product evaluation- what results were obtained by the program, how well were needs reduced by the program and what should be done with the program after it has run its course.

**What are the strengths of management-oriented evaluation?**

* It gives focus to the evaluation
* Stresses the utility of the information-you do not have to wait until the program is complete to begin evaluating
* It is easy to explain to all audiences, even those not experienced with the day to day operations of the program
* Supports evaluation of every part of the program as it grows and changes
* It stresses the timely use of feedback
* It is very useful because it attends to the information needs of the decision makers

**What are the limitations of management-oriented evaluation?**

* The evaluator may not be able to respond to questions or issues that may be important to some groups because they do not correspond with what the decision maker has set out as a purpose for the evaluation
* Programs that lack good leadership will not benefit
* It gives preference to top management and not grass roots stakeholders
* There is a possibility that the evaluation could become unfair and undemocratic. It can lead to costly and complex evaluations that may take money away from the running of the actual program.

**What is the purpose of the consumer-oriented evaluation approach?**

This type of evaluation is aimed at consumer education. It mostly deals with education and human services and it involves evaluating programs and materials available so that stakeholders can make decisions about where to spend money and on what. It seems like a kind of consumer watch system. Most types involve using a checklist approach to evaluation. They use the checklist to decide whether the product or program has merit.

**What aspects of the product does the evaluation usually address?**

It usually involves looking at four different aspects of the product. They are: its processes, content, transportability and effectiveness.

**What are the strengths of the consumer-oriented evaluation approach?**

* It is a service available to those who may not have time to do the evaluating themselves
* It increases consumer knowledge about products and programs
* It makes consumers more aware of commercial sales ploys
* Consumers are more discriminating in the way they select products

**What are the limitations of consumer-oriented evaluation?**

* Corporations seldom spend money or time to provide enough information about the performance of their products
* It will increase the cost of products over time
* It may suppress creativity if standards get too stringent
* It may threaten local initiatives because we will rely too heavily on outside products and services.

It seems to me that management-oriented evaluation approaches are the furthest away from my personal experience. I have never been in a management position where I would have been using a model similar to this and I can’t recall ever having the personal experience of being involved when a management-oriented approach was used in a business or workplace where I was employed. There are a few things that did occur to me as I was reading. The first one being Stufflebeam’s CIPP model. It seems like this would be an excellent organizational tool to use for evaluation. The list of general steps he provided work through all the necessary stages of the evaluation process from deciding who it is that will be using the evaluation report when it is finished, to providing a budget for the total evaluation program. Each of the steps is very specific with various questions to consider in each.

It seems like this model might be a very useful organization tool for other types of evaluations as well. Many of the same steps could be followed. For example: for any evaluation approach, you need to know what information you are collecting and for what purpose. You also need to know what instruments you will be using in each case. You need to decide your time frame and what will be your audience for each of the reports and what information would be pertinent to each audience. You would also need to know how you are going to go about reporting that information.

I can see how the management-oriented approach might be very time consuming and expensive. It is very detailed and would hopefully give you a lot of information when it is complete, but on the other hand working through those steps could be painstaking and a lot of time could pass before the evaluation is complete. A lengthy study could lead to expense. Money spent on a lengthy evaluation may have been better spent somewhere else in the program.

Evaluations done in this manner are geared at the management level. They seem to be missing the human component. There does not seem to be much room for qualitative data. People at the grass roots may feel threatened by an evaluation coming straight from the top. It will trickle down and they will be affected by the results, but they will not have any say in what is being evaluated or in what way the evaluation would be conducted or reported. According to House and Howe as quoted in (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004, p.96) “Critics argue that the management-oriented approach disenfranchises other stakeholders who have less power and resources.”

The idea of consumer-oriented evaluation hits closer to home for me. I am in the position of purchasing educational materials. I can see a purpose to having an evaluation system for those materials so there is a better chance that I am buying something useful. Most programs seem to be short of money and schools are not an exception to that rule. It can be difficult to decide what products will be worth the money and I usually do not have much money to spend. I have purchased educational products in the past that seemed like they would be a good purchase and they turn out to be useless to me. In the division that I was previously working for, the student services personnal decided that we were going to purchase a complicated and very expensive computer program designed to help children with reading and writing problems. It was sold to the resource teachers as something that we could not live without. When we received the program we found it to be less than what we were expecting. The children could not work on it independently and in many cases we could not find a portion of the program that fit in with a child’s learning need. It seemed like a lot of money to invest in an “okay” program. This was an occasion when a consumer evaluation would have been very valuable. I can see the need for this type of evaluation tool.

I liked the checklist published by Scriven (1974b). It seemed extensive, but useful. I can see, though, how publishing companies might not want to provide all of this information. It is time consuming and expensive to run field trials and provide evidence as to how well their products stood up to actual tests in the field. I can also see, given the expense involved, how this type of evaluating could turn out to be a hidden cost for the consumer. Companies are not likely going to go through the expense of evaluating without pushing some of those costs on to the consumer that is buying the products. I was wondering, as well, if the companies might slant the evaluation results so that they would not have a detrimental effect on their product.

The idea that consumer-oriented evaluation might be a threat to local initiatives makes sense to me as well. It is the same old adage-it is hard to compete in the local market. Consumers will go where the price is right. There is only so much money and consumers want to get as much bang for each dollar as possible. Local businesses would be small and may not have the cash flow necessary to run expensive consumer evaluations. Many local businesses are at the beginning stages and so they have the double whammy of not having cash flow and not having reputation to help them either.

I was wondering how “consumer reports”, both the magazine and the television program fit into this discussion. Are they a form of consumer-oriented evaluation? It seems like it would be because they choose the product they wish to study, they run a battery of tests depending on what the product is, and then they publish the results of their evaluations and make them available to the public.